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ABSTRACT

Some antecedent causes of the resistance or inability of women to set goals are explored. Aspects of socialization and education which determine the decision-making and goal-setting behavior of women in adolescence and in maturity are delineated. The thesis is put forth that political and societal institutions are, to a great extent, responsible for the inability of women to set formal or informal goals. Hall's (1972) model of coping strategies suggests three general mechanisms for dealing with goal-setting: Type I concerns structural role definition; Type II considers prioritizing role appropriate activities and Type III involves reorientation of role in response to others. A fourth type which may be added to this model includes a broader re-definition of existing social and political structures. Type III may elicit the most support from significant others in coping with conflict. Types I and IV would elicit least support and be most difficult to accomplish. Types I and IV are most closely related to long-range goals in that they require restructuring not only of role but of societal institutions. Strategies which consider each coping mechanism may include self-awareness, other awareness and societal awareness. An integrated analysis of goal-training and attainment places emphasis on individual, institutional and societal remedies and removes traditional responsibility from women themselves. (Author)

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ANTECEDENT DIFFICULTIES IN GOAL-SETTING FOR WOMEN

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Research on career- and life-planning has recently proliferated with a renewed perspective on the relationship of occupational aspiration and the meaning of work. This has been attributed to an interaction of changing values for work (Goodale and Hall, 1976), a holistic attitude toward the worker by the organization (Schein, 1978), a personal re-evaluation of one's life (Sheehy, G., 1976), and the beginnings of the redefinition of sex role differences for women and men (Minuchin, 1965; Bem, 1974, 1977). As a result, the dual-career family has had an impressive effect on individual career progress and family patterns (Hall, 1976).

A flurry of activity concerning "career paths" (c.f. Hall, 1976; Schein, 1978; Bolles, 1972; Crystal & Bolles, 1974) has placed primary emphasis on various models of planning, definition and attainment of goals (e.g., Hall & Hall, 1976). Goal setting which leads to performance and ultimately to psychological success upon goal attainment may enhance the self image of the individual which then may lead ultimately to commitment and more goal-setting (pp. 267, 8).

Most of the goal-related research in recent years has focused on the relationship between occupational (career) goals and other variables, such as adolescent aspirations (Sewell, 1964; Alexander, 1972); expectation and actual attainment of goals (Astin and Myint, 1971). Other research has examined the relevance of parental work habits (father and mother working outside the home and interaction of same sex or cross-sex working parent with career aspirations of women (Rosenfeld, 1978), and marriage as a determinant of career success or failure.

Without doubt, goal-setting behavior plays a critical role in the successful outcomes of a large percentage of individuals. This article presents the notion that women, because of a complex set of interactive determinants, are less able to concretely determine career plans using goal-related behavior. The determinates discussed include the socialization process and particularly role-associated demands which discourage career development. In addition, it is suggested that political and societal institutions as they are presently organized, contribute to the inability of women to set career goals. Finally, using Hall's (1972) model of coping strategies, determination of goal-setting and decision-making behaviors which enhance career development will be explored.

Assumptions About the Importance of Goal-Setting

Recent literature in motivation theory emphasize goal setting processes (Campbell and Pritchard, 1976; White, et al., 1976). Of particular interest is the finding, confirming earlier studies (Locke, 1968, 1970; Lawler, 1968) that generally "people usually work harder and perform better when specific task goals are established" (White, et al., 1976). Early studies found that not only was goal behavior related to performance outcome and satisfaction but also to the expectation of reward. The evaluation of performance outcome could be more easily determined if goals had previously been established. Further, White et al (1977) suggest that participation in goal setting processes by the worker, enhances acceptance commitment and productivity.

Another study (Erez, 1977) found that a significant relationship exists between goal-setting and feedback as a result of the interaction between the

individual and the environment. In other words, when a person sets goals with "no constraints" (Erez, 1977) and received meaningful feedback (on how well s/he is doing), goal setting would be significantly higher and also affect performance.

Recently, Hall and Hall (1976) have added at least one other variable to the goal-setting-performance-feedback cycle, suggesting that self-image was of critical importance to psychological success. This success, which comes out of the realization of a competency previously unchallenged (Lewin, 1936) provides self-reinforcement which in turn may produce involvement (Hall and Nougaim, 1968). Hall et al (1976) then extrapolate to the necessity of a high-support climate in order to effect performance and outcome.

As a result, it is evident that (1) goal-setting is important; (2) that performance and productivity are affected by goal-setting; (3) that goal-setting without feedback results in lower levels of performance; (4) that self-set goals lead to commitment; (5) that in a high-support climate, performance and outcome are affected while in a low-support climate an individual may need to depend upon personal strengths such as self-esteem (Hall & Hall, 1976). Since career has in the past and more recently been closely associated with goal-setting behavior, women may be short-changed in goal-setting ability. We will concentrate on only two of several psycho-social variables which determine career-oriented goal-setting: socialization and role-modeling. A third variable to be mentioned is the present structure of organization which discriminates further against women.

Socialization

It has been generally assumed that sex differences are a product of complex interactions of culture and society. Socialization focuses on the ways in which parents interact with their children, as infants, adolescents, and

adults. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) investigated studies of sex differences and found that mothers of children encouraged or discouraged behaviors in both boys and girls, with no apparent sex-related differences. Although most of the studies showed few differences in relation to sex, mothers and fathers have been found to use different approaches where sex-appropriate experiences are concerned. For example, boys are punished and rewarded more for aggressive behavior, while girls are encouraged to be deferent and passive and are rewarded for doing so. While in fact, boys are discouraged from using "girl's" toys more vigorously than are girls from engaging in "boy's" activities, boys are, at a very early age, taught that, to be aggressive, independent and achieving, is good. As boys and girls mature into young adults, rigidity in sex typing occurs (Adams, 1970; Urberg and Labourie-Vief, 1976). Behaviors associated with masculinity (dominance, aggression, risk-taking) and femininity (passivity, nurturance, expressiveness) (Bem, 1974) become more apparent and more important. For example, Vanden Paele (1968) suggests that later choices of early adolescents are based upon social norms and expectations. Therefore, adaptation of sex-appropriate behaviors to the expectations of others may also influence aspirations toward career preferences.

In fact, a study of elementary school girls' self perception of competence as related to their mothers' self perception of competence showed that self-perception of competence is intergenerational (Baruch, 1976). More importantly, higher-competence girls had higher career aspirations. One possible explanation for this may be socialization and traditional sex-role appropriate behavior (Baruch, 1976). Since the majority of women and girls are still socialized in traditional ways, self perception of most women will hamper goal-setting even further. Therefore in adolescence, when girls become more responsive to sex role linked behaviors (for example, how they look and

act in feminine ways), their perception of the relationship of competence to sex roles is critical (c.f. Baruch, 1976).

With a lowering of aspiration levels (Epstein, 1971) women are often encouraged to become "other-directed" and stop making intellectual demands on themselves. However, more women attend college than ever before. Observation tells us that here, where women are challenged intellectually and are often expected to have their career goals and life goals already secured, socialization or cultural stereotyping (Monahan, Kuhn and Shaver, 1974) takes over again and women experience "fear of success" (Horner, 1970) in college, traditionally male settings. Whether intrapsychological or cultural in origin, this reaction is consistent with other literature on sex differences and self image (Broverman, et al, 1970) in adding constraints to an already accumulating list of socialized demands. Fear of success may also be congruent with the inability to engage in goal-directed behavior. For example, Trigg and Perlman (1976) found that "social factors are crucial in the choice of a nontraditional career." In an attempt to satisfy herself, but more importantly, to satisfy significant others, a woman in college frequently will choose a more traditional career than opt for a non-traditional one (Trigg and Perlman, 1976). Even if a woman had attempted to develop career goals, the influence of socialization and reinforcement of traditional expectations would not allow her to continue in that direction.

Thus, in her quest for closeness and dependence upon others, a woman forsakes the freedom to decide how her life will be played out. This is reinforced by those who will profit most from enforced, sex-typed behavior. The difficulty with this cycle is that skills such as nurturance and support, interpersonal competencies, are as yet not considered as valuable in the professional world as are other traits such as leadership capabilities, aggressiveness or dominance.

The Importance of Role

Research on women and careers has focused on role: inter- and intra-sender conflict (Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977), specifically the interaction of social roles and work roles. Other role-related literature examines the stress of traditional roles (Hall and Gordon, 1972) and other effects of role interaction (Hall, 1972, 1975). One consistent finding is that women experience inter-role conflict, that is conflict between roles, especially married women who work outside the home. This is usually in the form of role overload, which requires demands made on an individual as a result of a number of roles (Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977). Role conflict may be a result of role definition, by self, significant others and the environment. For example, a married woman's role may be defined as a group of sub-identities--wife, mother, housewife and employee (Hall, 1972). Further, Hall (1972) following Levinson (1959) defines role as being made up of three components: "(1) structurally given demands such as norms and expectations; (2) personal role conception: an inner definition of what an individual is supposed to be; and (3) role behavior: ways in which an individual acts, in accord with or violation of a set of organizational norms." (Hall, 1972) Consequently an individual who deviates from any one or more of the three components may experience role conflict. For women norms and expectations are essentially traditional. They are expected at the very least to care for home and family even if it is in addition to other work.

Hall and Gordon (1973) not surprisingly found, for example, that women who were both housewives and employed outside the home experienced more ambiguity and role conflict than women who had one major "career," housewife. Further, women report even stronger role conflict if they enter careers which are male sex role appropriate (O'Leary, 1974).

Generally, women experience this phenomenon of role conflict or overload because they do not forsake one job (housewife, mother) for another, but

often take on both, thus working 40 hours outside the home and another 40-80 in it.

Self image and self concept may often be a result of socialization processes. Behavior which is in violation of the traditional socialized roles women take, is punished. As a result, deviation in non-traditional ways, such as forsaking a home and family, necessitates extremes of coping behavior in order to avoid role conflict (Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977).

In addition to the reinforcement and expectations involved in participating in several full time activities, many women experience a continual lack of goal-related feelings of success or satisfaction. However, should a woman overcome socialized processes and role conflicts and enter a career, she is again kept from complete inclusion by structural determinants of discrimination. Hartmann (197) has described most organizations as being based on a patriarchal model of bureaucracy historically determined by British "home" industries in the 1800's. With the industrial revolution, men were naturally suited to positions of authority since they had previously controlled income and production. Women were kept home to care for children who had been disallowed work by child labor laws.

Currently, many organizations hire women in low level positions or relegate them to "training" programs, while men still occupy the largest percentage of mid- and high-level management positions. In addition to learning goal setting behaviors, women need to examine closely alternative coping strategies which place some responsibilities on the organization and prospective employers.

Mechanisms

We have examined some of the antecedent causes for the fear or lack of planning or goal setting behaviors in women. What can be done to change

some of the tradition bound norms and expectations with which women have to live? Further, what are the implications for organizations which are hiring women in ever-increasing numbers and rightfully expect high degrees of commitment and career-interest? How can women be trained (or retrained) to insure growth?

1. Making Others Aware: Communicating a need to collect herself and plan her life, will encourage a woman by giving her the support she needs. While the assistance which others can provide, often turns into rescue attempts, it can be reinforcing in professing a strong belief in a woman that she can accomplish goals which satisfy her, exclusively. This of course may not coincide with the immediate needs of her family to have her remain in her traditional role, but before she can function effectively as an individual, she needs this encouragement to separate herself, a frightening prospect for someone who has spent most of her life preparing to be a part of a whole.

Another aspect of support concerns establishment of a single self identity. As an outgrowth of the family expectation, many women are only able to identify their psychological selves through others . . . usually a husband (if they are married) or children. Without this, a woman is forced to deal with the ambivalence and irony of a self identity, with no labels, facades or shields. In order for women to be successful planners and goal-setters, they must force themselves to define who they are--not what they do (role) but what constitutes a set of values, beliefs and ethics which define their lives.

2. Assertive Techniques: One major aspect of this behavioral technique which has recently become so popular, is planning. When a woman practices becoming more assertive, she begins to think of herself as an individual with

her own needs, separate from the needs of her family or any "significant others." Assertiveness promotes the concept of a positive self image, of having personal rights and asking for what one wants, not at the expense of others, but thinking of oneself, rather than depending on others to do the thinking or asking. Women have been taught to gain what they want through the skillful manipulation of others. Assertiveness promotes honesty and directness; "taking charge of oneself."

3. Education and Self Awareness: Socialized roles and sex-associated behaviors take a lifetime to develop, as we have seen in earlier sections of this paper. Without help and support, reinforcement and belief, women will continue finding themselves in many double-bind situations trying to satisfy the expectations of others at their own expense. Learning about the problems associated with being narrowly defined, will contribute a great deal toward ultimate change. Becoming committed to finding out about oneself, through reading, counseling or therapy, can assist in confronting and handling critical issues of survival and self-identity.

4. Coping Strategies: In referring to subidentities and resultant role conflict, Hall (1972) suggests three levels or types of coping strategies based on Levinson's (1959) role processes: (1) structurally imposed demands, (2) personal role conception, and (3) role behavior.

Type I: structural role redefinition, which refers to direct means of handling role conflict, such as role change or redefinition, renegotiation or integration; Type II: doping entails prioritizing activities within one's role, such as child care; and Type III: coping involves reorienting one's role to respond to the expectations of others.

Examples of Type I coping demands the redefinition of expectations held by others such that a new set of behaviors evolves (c.f. Hall, 1972). Type II

coping involves realigning internal role perceptions through the manipulation of role-related demands. Type III coping concerns trying harder to accomplish demands set up as a part of a role or set of roles.

Type III behaviors would not involve any real change in role but rather represent an attempt to reduce conflict by being better at handling role demands. This coping mechanism would be encouraged by significant others who wished to preserve the status quo. It would probably not allow for pursuance of a woman's individual career goals. Using Type II coping strategies also involves having the same role demands but dealing with them more efficiently, establishing priorities or eliminating roles. Role elimination may usually be accomplished by dropping personal interests such as volunteer work, again depriving a woman of goal-oriented work outside the home. Type I coping involves direct confrontation of role expectations and integrating changes based on new information and mutual agreement. Like some of the strategies noted earlier, this one considers proactive structural methods for change, involving the woman and significant others. One aspect of Type I coping involves changing social norms of the larger society rather than only specific role senders (Hall, 1972).

Conclusions

Some of the requisites for goal-setting around career growth are determined early in life. Economic and political factors have not been explored in this paper. It has focused on several important processes which, because of their interactive characteristics, work together to keep women from satisfactorily structuring careers. Based on relevant literature, it has been demonstrated that socialization and role-related issues determine goal success. There is literature as well which points to structural barriers outside of an

individual's control which further assist in goal-realization.

Coping strategies of various types may be helpful in re-ordering or re-prioritizing role demands. A note of caution is in order, however. Any strategy which involves only the woman, as sole purveyor of change, is doomed. A broader redefinition of structural, organizational change is needed which then will include the specific needs and exigencies of women.

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